

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8022

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 1427

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI PFOR XA

SUBJECT: REGIONAL ARMS RESTRAINTS STUDY

REF: STATE 20621

HERE FOLLOWING EMBASSY'S COMMENTS IN RESPONSE TO REFTEL REQUEST.

1. ETHIOPIA. ETHIOPIA'S ARMS NEEDS ARE RELATED TO THREE CATEGORIES OF PROBLEMS:

(A) INTERNAL SECURITY IN A TRADITIONALLY VIOLENT TRIBAL COUNTRY WITH A LONG HISTORY OF DISSIDENCE AND TENUOUS GOVERNMENTAL CONTROLS;

(B) THE CONFLICT IN ERITREA, TECHNICALLY AN INTERNAL PROBLEM BUT FUELED BY ARMS/MONEY INPUTS FROM ARABS; AND

(C) THE "SOMALI TREAT" BACKED BY SOVIET-SUPPLIED ARMS.

2. TO HANDLE THESE PROBLEMS, ALL POTENTIALLY QUITE SERIOUS, ETHIOPIA HAS FORCES, TRAINED AND EQUIPPED, OF LESS THAN 50,000 MILITARY, ABOUT 10,000 TERRITORIALS, AND 40,000 POLICE. IN A TOPOGRAPHICALLY DIFFICULT, RELATIVELY ROADLESS COUNTRY OF 27 MILLION THIS IS NOT EXCESSIVE; IN FACT, FORCES ARE ALREADY STRETCHED THIN BY MOUNTING DIFFICULTIES. MUCH OF THEIR EQUIPMENT IS OBSOLETE OR OBSOLESCEMENT, AND THERE IS AN IMBALANCE AS COMPARED TO SOMALIA, WHOSE AIRCRAFT, TANKS, ARTILLERY ETC., ARE
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MORE NUMEROUS THAN THOSE OF THE EPMG. THUS ETHIOPIAN NEEDS, AS

EPMG PERCEIVES THEM, SEEM RATIONAL.

3. RESTRAINT ON ARMS INPUTS, THEREFORE, WOULD DEPEND ON REDUCING PROBLEMS AND TENSIONS IN THE THREE GENERAL AREAS ABOVE.

(A) THERE APPEARS TO BE NOTHING USG CAN DO TO REDUCE LEVEL OF ONGOING (IN SOME CASES TRADITIONAL) INTERNAL DISSIDENCE. AS NEWLY SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT GROING FOR ZYSMZ CHA ZULG N A, \$.9\$34,8"

(& 85 9:8356, EPMG WOULD SEE NO RULE FOR "CAPITALIST" USG IN THIS FIELD, AND MOREOVER EMBASSY WOULD NOT WISH TO BE INVOLVED IN (AND THEREFORE PARTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR) MEASURES AFFECTING TENSIONS BETWEEN GOVT AND PEOPLE.

(C) ON ERITREA, USG HAS TAKEN STEPS WITH EPMG AND WITH SOME OTHER FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS TO PROMOTE RESTRAINT BOTH IN ACTIONS ON THE GROUND IN ERITREA AND IN ARAB ARMS INPUTS. USG POSITION FAVORING PEACEFUL POLITICAL SETTLEMENT HAS BEEN MADE KNOWN PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY. EMBASSY BELIEVES THESE US EFFORTS SHOULD CONTINUE, BUT SEES NO ADDITIONAL EFFECTIVE STEPS THAT WE CAN USEFULLY TAKE WITHOUT ADVERSELY AFFECTING OTHER US INTERESTS.

(C) SOMALIA. ESCALATION OF ARMS INPUTS IN THIS AREA BEGAN WITH SOVIET DECISION IN 1972 GREATLY TO STEP UP QUANTITIES AND QUALITIES OF NEW ARMS TO SOMALIA THAT HAVE UPSET THE BALANCE WITH ETHIOPIA. EPMG IS NOW OBTAINING FROM U.S., MOSTLY BY PURCHASE BUT WITH SOME GRANT MAP, EQUIPMENT DESIGNED PARTIALLY TO REDRESS THE BALANCE. U.S. POLICY DECISIONS HAVE APPROVED THESE INPUTS AS BEING IN OVERALL INTERESTS OF USG, AND AS BEING COMMENSURATE WITH REQUIREMENTS OF THE SITUATION. A DECISION TO CURTAIL U.S. INPUTS TO EPMG NOW WOULD HARDLY RESULT IN SOV/SOMALI RESTRAINT, AND MIGHT HAVE OPPOSIT EFFECT. EMBASSY DOUBTS THATHWMY DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS BY USG COULD BE EFFECTIVE IN REDUCING EQUIPMENT IN OR ON ITS WAY TO SOMALIA, THUS PRODUCING REDUCTION OF TENSIONS THAT COULD ALLOW USG CORRESPONDINGLY TO CURTAIL U.S. INPUTS TO EPMG.

4. GIVEN HARSH REALITIES OF ETHIOPIAN SITUATION, EMBASSY IS AT A LOSS TO SUGGEST INCENTIVES THAT MIGHT BE OFFERED SO AS TO RE-CONFIDENTIAL

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STRAIN OR CURTAIL EPMG ARMS REQUISITIONS. BUDGETARY STRICTURES HAVE SO FAR NOT BEEN A FACTOR IN ETHIOPIA, WHOSE FOREIGN EXCHANGE RESERVES CONTINUE TO RISE DESPITE SUBSTANTIAL CASH AND CREDIT PURCHASES OF ARMS; RESERVES NOW AMOUNT TO WELL OVER ONE YEAR'S WORTH OF IMPORTS. EPMG IS, HOWEVER, APPROACHING UPPER LIMIT OF PRUDENT EXPENDITURES FOR ARMS, AND FOR O & M COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH NEW PURCHASES. FURTHER PRUCHASES IN OUT-YEARS WILL PROBABLY BE INCREASINGLY AFFECTED BY BUDGETARY CONSTRAINTS.

5. ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY. IN SHORT RUN IT SEEMS MOST UNLIKELY THAT OAU COULD PLAY ANY CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN RESTRAINTS. WITH ANGOLA PROBLEM STILL BOILING, ANY EFFORT TO INTRODUCE THE SUBJECT IN OAU FORUMS WOULD FAIL TO SUPPORT BECAUSE MANY COUNTRIES WOULD SEE IT AS SHORT-TERM PLOY DESIGNED TO CURB USSR/CUBAN INPUTS INTO ANGOLA. HOWEVER, IN LONGER RUN THERE MIGHT WELL BE A ROLE FOR OAU IN PROMOTING RESTRAINT, A ROLE THAT WOULD TAKE CONSIDERABLE TIME TO MAKE EFFECTIVE BUT THAT FITS WELL WITH GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF OAU OF REDUCING TENSIONS WITHIN AFRICA.

6. HOWEVER, THERE IS ONE AREA ON WHICH LITTLE OR NO RESTRAINT WILL BE POSSIBLE FOR OAU EVEN IN MID-TERM, AND THAT IS ON ARMS FOR OAU-RECOGNIZED "LIBERATION MOVEMENTS", PARTICULARLY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, BUT ALSO IN SPANISH SAHARA AND PERHAPS DJIBOUTI-TFAL.
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